ÉTUDES ÉCOSSAISES

Études écossaises

20 | 2018
The Construction and Reconstruction of Scotland

The Reconstruction of an Ancient Past in Shakespeare's Drama

La reconstruction d'un passé reculé dans les pièces de Shakespeare

Céline Savatier-Lahondès

OpenEdition Journals

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/etudesecossaises/1394
ISSN: 1969-6337

Publisher
UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Printed version
ISBN: 978-2-37747-047-1
ISSN: 1240-1439

Electronic reference
Céline Savatier-Lahondès, « The Reconstruction of an Ancient Past in Shakespeare's Drama », *Études écossaises* [Online], 20 | 2018, Online since 01 April 2018, connection on 08 September 2020. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/etudesecossaises/1394

The Reconstruction of an Ancient Past in Shakespeare's Drama

La reconstruction d'un passé reculé dans les pièces de Shakespeare

Céline Savatier-Lahondès

This investigation was encouraged by Professor Danièle Berton Charrière from Université Clermont-Auvergne whose research on the "Celtic" domain herself together with Professor Jean Berton provided an impetus, and Professor John Drakakis from the University of Stirling who is currently involved in the revision of Geoffrey Bullough's Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare.

1 When we think of Antiquity in relation to Shakespeare, it is Classic Antiquity that first comes to mind. The English Renaissance, after the Italian and the French Renaissances, was very much influenced by the Classics. What was later labeled Humanism involved the rediscovery of Ancient Greek and Roman writers. As many children in Italy, France, and later, England, William Shakespeare was taught how to write according to the Classics whose pedagogic and aesthetic influence intensified due to the rapid rise of translations and to an increase in the volume of books that found their way west to Europe and from there to England after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

2 However, this research aims to investigate another historical domain, one which is less obvious than the Classics partly because it left, by comparison with them, almost no architectural traces, and a smaller number of texts. Although its legacy was primarily oral, it was transmitted to England by medieval monks who transcribed its narratives in works such as *The Yellow Book of Lecan* (late 14th–early 15th century), *The Book of Leinster* (12th century), *The White Book of Rhydderch (about 1300)*, *The Red Book of Hergest* (late 14th century) or *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* (late 15th–early 16th century). It is these collections that are the repositories of an extraordinarily rich assembly of myths. Although these mythical narratives appear to be distorted by layers of Christian exegesis, the insular literary matter they contain is visible enough to withstand critical examination. Motifs that belong to this "Celtic" culture re-appeared in later literary works and in popular discourse that carried them into the Middle Ages and from

thence into the English Renaissance, a time of "intense national self-consciousness" (Helgerson, 1992). The Arthurian legend and most of the Medieval lays[1] for instance, clearly contain "Celtic"[2] motifs, that sometimes existed alongside explicitly Christian and Classical ones.[3] These texts were not consciously put forward as there was no pride in being "Celtic" whatsoever. As John Collis noticed "in his *Historia* Buchanan is the first author to suggest that the origin of some of the population of Ireland and the British Isles was Celtic" although "a number of competing ideas [existed about the origins of] early British History" (Collis, 2003, p. 40),[4] among which was the genealogy of Brutus and the Trojans who were believed to be the historical ancestors of the English people.

3 Within this context of national identity or what we might now call an emergent "Englishness", Shakespeare was not insulated from this process of transmission of motifs belonging to the ancient culture of the British Isles. The thesis that will be advanced here is that Shakespeare's drama shows traces of this Ancient "Celtic" culture. This is a comparatively unexplored aspect of what has come to be called the study of Shakespeare's "sources". It will extend and enrich the process of textual transmission, and will help to identify more clearly one particular element of an otherwise complex series of textual influences on his plays.

4 The term "Ancient" refers to the period before the fall of the Roman Empire, the commonly accepted date of which is 476 AD when the last Roman Emperor Romulus Augustus was deposed. Notwithstanding the more nuanced concept of Late Antiquity, which serves as a transitional period, this date traditionally marks the end of the Ancient times and the beginning of the Middle Ages in Western Europe. The definition of the term "Ancient" once more turns on the notion of Classical Antiquity that encompasses the Greek and Roman worlds. This project, however, focuses on the period prior to Christianization and before the Roman invasion of Britain. We might refer to this period of Antiquity as the "Celtic" past of what was at this time a fragmented British Isles.

5 The term "Celtic", used here in inverted comas, is a complex one which needs further detailed definition, if not replacement, as we shall see. The "Celtic" motifs do not occupy as central a position as the Classics do in Shakespeare's work; they need to be located beneath the surface of these texts, and, consequently they sometimes require in-depth analysis. The aim is to establish the various links between Shakespeare's texts and this "Celtic" materialin order to (re)construct a reliable picture of its influence. This has not really been addressed before, so in this sense we can talk of "construction". However, the culture in question did exist, and therefore, our aim is to produce a "reconstruction" of an area of Shakespearean drama that has been partially overlooked by commentators.

6 This exploration of a particular area of Antiquity aims to make a contribution to the literary archeology of Britain. A field of investigation has to be delimited in order to excavate relevant data which will facilitate the reconstruction of a mental picture of what the epithet "Celtic" might suggest. The second sense of the verb "reconstruct" in the *OED* is "to restore (something past) mentally, to construct anew in the mind". This restoration has to be conceived in the mind before we can demonstrate that Shakespeare utilized remnants of that culture in his work, whether he did so consciously or not. It appears logical enough that an author's native culture should be embedded in his work. Roland Barthes goes some way to offer an organic definition of style in his book, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) which links the relationship between

writing and history to the body of the author: "[...] images, a flow of words, a lexicon, are born from the body and the past of the writer and little by little become the very automatisms of his art. Thus, under the name of style is formed an autarkic language whose roots only dig into the personal and secret mythology of the author."[5] The personal exists in relation to the historical in a larger sense, and therefore the past emerges without any need of intentionality on the part of the author. Consequently, layer-by-layer excavation of some of its details can take place, revealing motifs which contribute to the mental reconstruction of an historical and mythological landscape.

7 This process of excavation and re-assembly must be undertaken with great care. As in archeology, we do not want to overlook or damage what we uncover. Besides, the purpose is not to reconstruct what has been lost, which would be virtually impossible, but to preserve and restore the remnants. Only in very rare cases is the actual reconstruction of Antique material possible, and, supposedly, it only occurs when archeologists are sure that they have not obscured the collected data with their own interpretations.[6] Sir Arthur John Evans (1851–1941), the famous archeologist, proceeded to recreate a massive material reconstruction of the palace of Cnossos and decorated it with what today looks like art nouveau motifs, showing that for Evans, scientific research was never far away from his own imaginary conceptions of the Hellenistic world.[7] Although there is always a value to be derived from interpretation, the enquirers need to beware of what they bring to their analysis so that they do not lapse into anachronism. Even at a scientific level, a danger is the temptation to invent a fantasy world, which is often the case when the epithet "Celtic" is used in modern-day popular discourse. Firstly, we will attempt a definition of the term "Celtic", showing the complexity of its usage with a view to determining its relevance. Then, we will explore the occurrence of Ancient insular material in plays of Shakespeare such as *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Eventually, beyond their identification, we will enquire about the narrative function of such motifs in Shakespeare's drama.

8 To some, the term "Celtic" indicates a romantic nostalgia in relation to our own European past, and this is partly why it remains complex in many ways. Depending on the historical context, the "reality" to which the term refers varies considerably; it encapsulates a national grouping (people), identity, art, music, literature and language, but also archeology and Ancient times. Indeed, from the 18th and especially 19th century up to our own time, each historical moment contributes its own understanding to what the term "Celt" means, and in the 19th century attempts were made to re-invent a "Celtic" past, along with its supposed social and cultural rituals.

9 As Eamonn P. Kelly of the Irish Museum of Archeology in Dublin suggested in a documentary for Channel 4 in 2006,[8] the term provides a very efficient publicity argument for Ireland. Because there is a popular interest in all that is "Celtic", the Irish [but also the Welsh, Scots and Bretons] have cleverly capitalized on it. The very term can be envisaged as a powerful argument in favour of a fantasized bond between people over the centuries. As an example we may note the following imprint on a t-shirt that reads: "The Celts, still at work with Nature". Are you a Celt because you work with Nature? Indeed, it is very doubtful that all farmers would consider themselves as "Celts". Very often the traits that have been retained in the popular imagination conform in part to the historical conception of the Iron Age "Celts" though, the connection being mostly with the importance of Nature as a mother goddess or the forest as sanctuary. However, the whole concept has been idealized and mythologized[9]

as a nostalgia for a past when things were assumed to be simpler, better, or even preferable to a more complex present.

10 The way the term is used today clashes with archeological and philological scientific conceptions. In most cases, people refer to the "Celtic Fringe" in geographical terms, as Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Brittany, places where the Gaelic (or Goidelic) and Brythonic languages continue to be active today, but they ignore the extent of the original geographic area of the "Celtic" languages. Language is a reliable means with which to qualify the concept, but are you a "Celt" because you speak a "Celtic" language and are you not a "Celt" if you do not? Irish Gaelic is an entrance requirement for students registering in the National University of Ireland, but it is doubtful that all Gaelic speakers would consider themselves as "Celts" rather than Irish. Nobody speaks a Celtic language in today's Gaul or Gallia (France) except in Brittany, but the country is part of the original zone of expansion of the "Celtic" branch of Indo-European languages. Could the French see themselves as "Celts" then? The answer is most certainly not since "Celtic" as a unique origin no longer exists and has probably never existed. However, this shows how difficult it is to define the term "Celtic" as a means of establishing national identity. What's more, it is dangerously vague since it does not cover the historical diversity of the peoples of the "Celtic" zone and can lead to the mythopoeic expression of an extremist and racist nationalist identity.

> *Le public est avide de connaissances sur un peuple qui lui semble représenter une partie de son propre passé et sur une culture assimilée successivement à l'état de nature, au romantisme, à l'indépendance nationale. La culture des Celtes suggère pour lui une alternative au classicisme, à la raison d'État, voire au christianisme ou à la mondialisation. Les Celtes sont du domaine de l'utopie, fût-elle réduite à un unique village gaulois ; on a parfois l'impression que, pour le public, leur insertion dans la succession normale des civilisations historiques détruirait inutilement un rêve agréable.* (Buchsenschutz, 2015, p. 3)[10]

11 The critical analysis of popular enthusiasm, however interesting it might be from a sociological point of view, is beyond the scope of the present project. Professor Kelly kindly responded to a personal query in relation to the definition of the term in an email which sums up all the aspects of the problem, while also acknowledging the insular antiquity of some motifs in Shakespeare's work:

> The term "Celtic" has a useful meaning when used to describe "Celtic" Art or "Celtic" languages. It is the use of the term "Celtic" to define a race of people that is problematic. It is well known that Shakespeare drew on Irish, Welsh, Scottish and Ancient British traditions and folklore to inspire his drama. Indeed, he may even have drawn on some Breton traditions [...]. Some of these traditions are inter-related and some are not. One might apply the term "Celtic" to this material in order to distinguish it from English or Anglo-Saxon traditions, however, to use the term suggests a uniformity that is not demonstrable. If you can establish the various sources of Shakespeare's material why not name it as Welsh, Irish, Scottish, etc. After all no ancient Irishman, or Scotsman or Welshman ever conceived of themselves as "Celtic" nor would the term have been current in Shakespeare's time. It's a term that has only come into vogue since the 19th century. (Kelly, 2016)[11]

12 Furthermore, the definition of the concept "Celt" is still in progress from an archeological point of view, hence the impossibility of establishing a stable meaning for the term. The geographical 'origin' associated with it, that was thought to have been for decades central Europe, has now been challenged by the claims of Barry Cunliffe and John T. Koch, that "the Proto-Indo-European parent language reached Europe's Atlantic façade as Proto-Indo-European and then evolved into Celtic there. It did not

undergo the sound changes defining Celtic (such as weakening of *p) in some other place (such as Central Europe) and then move west" (Koch, 2015b, slide 7). It then "expanded back towards west-central Europe, preceding the historical expansions, and onward to Cisalpine Gaul and Anatolian Galatia" (*ibid.*, front slide). This coincides with the period of the Bronze Age in the 3rd millennium BC while the common Central Europe Model focuses on the Iron Age, around the 8th century for the Hallstatt period and the 5th century for the La Tène one.

13 Moreover, Koch, quoting MacCone, observed in a lecture at the British Museum in October 2015 that "*Keltoi[12] ('Celts') was the name that the people who spoke Proto-Celtic [...] called themselves" (Koch, 2015a, slide 8). Although Koch clearly expressed some doubts about that claim by Kim MacCone, this sheds the light on the highly complex, if not impossible, task of identifying who the "Celts" were. Our aim is to establish a pattern for the use of the term that can be deployed in relation to Shakespeare studies, hence the need for as precise a definition as possible from a literary point of view.

14 From a linguistic point of view, it is in 1707 that a relevant "Celtic" family of cognate languages was scientifically discovered by Edward Lhuyd (1660–1709).[13] Within the Celtic branch itself, two subdivisions appear—the P-Celtic (Brythonic) and the Q-Celtic (Goidelic), which respectively spawned the Welsh, Cornish and Breton languages on one hand, and the Irish and Scottish Gaelic on the other hand. Although Lhuyd listed all the Celtic languages that existed at the time, including Manx and Cornish which have since disappeared (and are in the process of being revived), he used the adjective "Celtic" sparingly, and the epithet, it would seem, wasn't in common use in Shakespeare's time. The term came into vogue from the end of the 18th century onwards "owing to a wave of Celtomania to which numerous Welsh, Scottish and Irish academic societies contributed" (Buchsenschutz, 2015, p. 16–17).[14] These studies were not initially accepted in their own right, since among classicists and philologists, there was a general view that their disciplines provided the model for all other philological research. However, to scholars like John Rhŷs, philology itself was:

> The science which afforded incontrovertible proof that the highly prestigious Greek and Latin, and the newcomer Sanskrit, were made of the very same stuff as his despised native language; likewise, that the overlooked Celtic literature could and should stand shoulder to shoulder with the canonized monuments of the mainstream of Western civilization. With the secret weapon of philology, Rhŷs shattered the persistent prejudice that minority ethnicity must be shed to "get on" in the greater world. (Koch, 1990, p. 32)

Philology became a means whereby the recognition and survival of a little regarded linguistic and cultural heritage could be acknowledged.

15 The movement called the "Celtic Revival" at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was nourished by philological studies, linguistic discoveries and the literary creations of artists like W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge as far as Ireland was concerned, and in Welsh by the claims of Iolo Morgannwg, in the 19th century, and the writings of T. Gwynn Jones in the early 20th century. This period of time bridged the cultural and political spheres and contributed to the strong impetus which led to the independence of the republic of Ireland in 1920. In contemporary parlance, the term also articulates an intense enthusiasm for rich material which, although saturated in the current languages of politics and religion remains present nonetheless.

16 Almost a century after the great cultural revival, the appellation was at the centre of a controversy about the scientific validity of its usage, labeled "Celto-scepticism", which developed among British and Irish scholars in the 1990s:

> On both sides of the Irish Sea, the whole efficacy of a unified, philologically defined Celtic Studies is openly questioned. To what extent can the notion of the 'Celtic' be validly extended beyond the Indo-European family tree? How meaningful is this concept—as opposed to a separate Irish, Welsh, etc.—when we talk about Celtic literature, Celtic culture, Celtic history, is Celtic an arbitrary shotgun wedding between nations profoundly different from, and ambivalent about, each other? (Koch, 1990, p. 35)

17 We will not pursue this issue further, but one of the results was that some teachers of Celtic felt that they could no longer use the very term that they had used to describe their own discipline; indeed, Thomas Clancy, suggested that "caught between what Patrick Sims-Williams of Aberystwyth University called 'Celtomania and Celto-scepticism', most scholars just stopped using the C-word and got on with their work" (Clancy, 2015). However, the 15th International Congress of Celtic Studies held in Glasgow in 2015 was not renamed and despite the controversy, the epithet is still used in literary studies while there continues to be a consensus over the use of the term in languages and philology.

18 In conclusion, the understanding is that there is a need to be precise in the use of the appellation "Celtic". Rather than dealing with the adjective "Celtic" it is important to consider the philological element of the concept. The focus will be on the Ancient past of the British Isles and also, at times, on the parts of Europe that are neither Classic nor Germanic. Where possible, the particularities of each culture will be named, especially when dealing with peoples: Welsh, Irish, Scottish, Ancient British or Gaul. The appellation "Celtic Antiquity of the British Isles"[15] is interesting as a collective term because it provides a historical and scientific context and serves the purpose of equating what may be described as a "minority" study with that of the more established protocols of the examination of Classic Antiquity, thereby opening up a field of scholarly enquiry that has hitherto been given little attention. At the same time, it promotes and publicizes the Ancient cultures of the British Isles, and it is precise enough to provide a resistance to the nostalgia integral to romantic visions and fantasy. In any case, it is now reasonable to use the term Celtic as applied to languages and Art without inverted comas. By extension, the appellative refers to the literary and mythological corpus related to the languages of the Celtic branch, that is to say, mostly the corpus of Irish and Welsh texts, but also extended to some Scottish manuscripts. There, it has become conventional among scholars to use the term, and it will be employed here without inverted comas, since Celtic Studies not only deals with language and linguistics but also with literature. Besides, some of the texts under scrutiny may be in Latin, Norman Frenchor Middle English and yet contain Celtic motifs. This is where a degree of complexity remains since what is identified as a non-Celtic corpus can contain references to Celtic matter. Such references are generally to motifs that are found in the Irish or Welsh mythological body of texts (the only ones remaining from the Celtic Indo-European branch) and /or occasionally in archeological data. Although such correspondences are few, some do exist between archeology and literature, as we will see shortly.

19 Most of the time, it appears very difficult to find a correspondence between what we might describe as direct and indirect sources. Nevertheless, according to Miranda Jane

Green, some parallels can be drawn between archeological data and vernacular literary matter. There are "features common to both which are too idiosyncratic to be due to chance: the sanctity of 'three'; the symbolism of cauldrons; the supernatural power of the human head; beliefs in an Otherworld similar to earthly life" (Green, 1993, p. 14).

20 Let us consider briefly the first of these motifs, the number three, which will provide an introduction to specifically Shakespearean matter. The most famous motif to be found in the Celtic archeological artwork is the triskel. In Irish mythology, the gods and the members of the sacerdotal branch very often appear in triplicates as in the case of Lug, the supreme god, and his two brothers, the druid Dagda and the champion god Ogme (Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1986, p. 421). Moreover, as Christian Guyonvarc'h observes, in the B version of *The Death of Cuchulainn*, the three daughters of Calatin, three druidesses, decide the nature of Ulster hero's death and raise the charm of a fantasized battle involving enchanted warrior trees (p. 150).

21 The Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*[16] echo the three druidesses and the motif of the warrior tree is present in the *Second Battle of Moytura* in the Irish mythological Cycle, in the *Mabinogi of Branwen*, daughter *of Lir* and in the Welsh poem of the *Kat Godeu* or *Fight of the Little Trees*.[17] It is difficult to overlook the parallel with *Macbeth*, in which the three Weird Sisters prophesy the movement of Birnam wood to the fortress of Dunsinane. If the origin of the walking forest seems to be authentically Irish and Welsh (it is also present in Gaul as recounted in Livy's *History of Rome*), it is more complex in relation to Shakespeares's Weird sisters. The motif of the triad also appears in the Classical image of the three Graeae, sisters to the Gorgons, who share one eye stolen by Perseus on his way to Medea's cave. The Graeae are similar to the Greek Moirai, the Northern European Norns, the Roman Parcae or the triadic Celtic Morrigna, that is to say Badbh, Nemhain and Morrigan. As Miranda Jane Green observes about the latter, "the goddesses combined destruction, sexuality and prophecy" (Green, 1995, p. 42). The Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* also bear at least some of these qualities together with the dark colour of paganism and hell indicating the passage of the Celtic myth into the discourse of Christianity. In Holinshed's *Chronicles*, that provide a source for the narrative of Shakespeare's play, they are said to "resemble creatures of an elder worlde" (Holinshed, 1577, p. 243), thus coming from Ancient times. Macbeth is said to have confidence in wizards: "[...] for that he had learned of certain wizards, in whose words he put great confidence—for that the prophecie had happened so right, which the three Fairis or weird sisters had declared onto him— [...]" (*ibid.*, p. 249, col. 1, l. 46–51). The three creatures are seen as "fairies". They belong to a world of wizardry and magic; they are druidesses, seers and prophetesses although the term "witch" (l. 52), used to describe them in Holinshed, refers to the devil and thus to a Christian conception retrospectively applied to this Ancient world. The vernacular textual sources are transformed according to the ideological assumptions of the time in which they were written, and one single motif can be found translated in accordance with various discourses. In an Indo-European context, several ideologies may be shown to bear certain similarities with each other, although what a detailed comparison reveals is the *difference* between them.

22 In the Shakespearean text, the Celtic motifs can be classified in a range proceeding from the most obvious to the most diffuse or hidden ones. In the first category, some elements of the Arthurian matter appear word for word at a manifest level in the text of *King Lear*[18], thereby providing an opening for a study of the Celtic matter in

Shakespeare's drama. The Celtic origin of the Arthurian legend has been attested by numerous scholars, among them C. J. Guyonvarc'h and P. Walter. In Act II, scene 2 of *King Lear*, Kent insults Oswald in the following manner: "Goose, if I had thee upon Sarum plain I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot." (2.2) Camelot is one of the names of King Arthur's Castle, therefore providing a reference to a specific element of the Ancient British legendary past that becomes clearly visible in the Shakespearean text; but beyond what is an apparent reference, there is a complexity hidden in the motif of the "goose". The goose has a deep meaning in Celtic mythology, as a bird associated with the passing from one world to the other. More especially white animals such as the white stag, or the white horse in the Middle English Breton Lay of Sir Launfal, supposedly belong to the other world.[19] However, the goose in Shakespeare's society is also a word for "a prostitute". In this way complex knots of meaning are embedded in the structure of the text, which are sometimes linked to what Francis Barker and Peter Hulme refer to as the con-texts[20] of the plays: "Con-texts with a hyphen, to signify a break from the inequality of the usual text/context relationship. Con-texts are themselves *texts* and *must be read with*: they do not simply make up a background." (Barker & Hulme, 1985, p. 236) Hence, with the shifting linguistic registers, a diffraction of meaning occurs: the idea of prostitutes as "Winchester geese", because the brothels were situated in the "suburbs" and hence came under the jurisdiction not of the City but of the Bishop of Winchester, comes to mind when the term "goose" is used by Kent in 2.2. But through Camelot and the image of the goose, the Celtic motif also, probably involuntarily, surfaces.

23 The mention of "Sarum plain" also adds referential complexity to Kent's cue since the sites of Old Sarum and New Sarum (Salisbury) both illustrate centuries of human history, from being the site of an early Iron Age hillfort, to its late medieval geographical identity as Old Sarum. Moreover, Salisbury plain is where the megalithic monument of Stonehenge is situated, which recalls part of the Ancient past, the Bronze Age. The monument was probably known by Shakespeare though it is doubtful that he knew it by the name of "Stonehenge". This shows the public awareness of both the Arthurian legend and the past in the society of the time. Indeed, as Adam Foxhas observed, during the 16th and 17th centuries, new versions of English history emerged as antiquarian research and writing developed (Fox, 2000, p. 214). The burgeoning interest in the past also included a fascination with the tradition of prophecy.

24 During the English Renaissance, written prophecies—originally an oral mode of representation—circulated widely for political purposes or to spread rumours, as Fox explains. They were written by clerics or learned authors, and at least one, dated 1537, invoked the authorship of Merlin (Fox, p. 365). This pattern appears, transformed, in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606) Act III, scene 2 when the character of the Fool, alone on stage, announces he will utter a prophecy: "This is a brave night to cool a courtesan. I'll speak a prophecy ere I go." (3.2, 79–80) Then, he pronounces what looks like the parody of a prophecy, undoubtedly containing some contemporary political allusions designed for public consumption, but which also ironically foresees the play's forthcoming pattern that is to say the reversal of the world order:

> When priests are more in word than matter,
> When brewers mar their malt with water,
> When nobles are their tailors' tutor,
> No heretics burned but wenches' suitors;
> When every case in law is right

> No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
> When slanders do not live in tongues,
> Nor cut-purses come not to throngs,
> When usurers tell their gold i'the field,
> And bawds and whores do churches build,
> Then shall the realm of Albion
> Come to great confusion:
> Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
> That going shall be used with feet.
> This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time. (3.2, 81–95)

25 The significant number of anaphora in this passage, especially introduced with the adverb "when", refers to the very essence of the prophecy which points to an uncertain moment in future time, while simultaneously invoking contemporary malpractices, thereby rendering the future present and producing a kind of inverted prophecy. The w/h words as a whole ("when" and "who") stress this interrogation while the Fool only utters affirmative sentences that emphasize his own particular knowledge of things to come as well as, for the most part, describing the present of the audience. The three negations, which alternate in the anaphoric position with "when" and the numerous internal negations paint a picture of what will cease to be in this topsy-turvy world, thus allowing a glimpse of a sombre vision of the future in the play, and rendering a mirrored image of Jacobean society.

26 However, Shakespeare mars the catastrophist tone with a manifest touch of humour, coming through to the audience mainly thanks to the references to his time—for instance making the fact that brewers add water to malt in the process of the brewing of beer a matter of utmost importance. The notion of economy and profit is an undertone for a modern reader but very probably is clear reference to a particular practice for a Jacobean audience. The use of humour appears to be Shakespeare's style when using cultural references to Ancient times, especially with the Arthurian matter. Age-old references serve the purpose of situating the action in time, but the approach is neither nostalgic nor romantic. They create a displacement of setting which allows the introduction of criticism of contemporary issues without being censored or condemned. This feature is not exclusive to references to Celtic Antiquity but is true of all exotic settings in Shakespeare's plays. Yet, with the tale of Arthur, humour seems to be used to communicate a self-debasement of one's own origins.

27 To this extent the Arthurian material was considered a dated object of ridicule. It also points to variations in the mode of transmission of the Celtic material through the ages. It has to be noted that although once immensely popular and regarded as true, the legend of Arthur, together with that of Brutus, became less credible at the turn of the 16th century, as Fox observes:

> Nevertheless, as Brutus and the giants and Arthur and his exploits were increasingly written out of the official version of the British past, this sounded the death knell of the hold of such legends upon folk tradition, even if their demise was to be long and drawn out.
> If changing antiquarian opinion played one important part in helping eventually to revise the popular view of the past, then the long-term impact of the reformation played another. Not for the Protestants the medieval sermon with its illustrative exemplum, its legends of saints delivered as truth, its mixing of historical anecdote with the stories of Scripture. The pulpit, which had formerly been such an important instrumentation in inventing and disseminating fabulous tales of former ages, began to turn its back on such things in the sixteenth century. They were

> despised instead as the fabrication of Catholicism, a signal illustration of the way in which the old Church had corrupted and diluted the word of God. (2000, pp. 252–3)

28 Although Shakespeare does transmit elements of "fabulous tales of former ages", he adds a contemporary tone to them. The monks who once were "passeurs" of Antique matter when they endeavoured to commit, with modifications, the oral Celtic mythology to writing, were like their writings, then relegated to a distant past. Thus our analysis has to take into account several layers that filter this material, from medieval times to the Tudor era, before reaching a satisfactory identification of an "Ancient" motif. As Barker and Hulme state, "discourses are never simply observable, but only approachable through their effects" (1986, p. 197). The tone with which Shakespeare treated the Arthurian matter is an indication of the discourse of the time. This moves the focus from interpretative problems of meaning to questions of instrumentality and function, as we will see in the final section of this discussion (see *supra*).

29 The connected figures of Merlin and the Fool cited in the passage from *King Lear* contribute to mix age-old tradition and contemporary discourse. Although limited, the reference to the Arthurian tale grants access to a pre-Christian oral tradition. Chronologically speaking "Lear's reign is located in the eighth century BC by Holinshed, and Arthur's in the sixth century AD, so in some sense the Fool does live before the time of Merlin".[21] As usual, Shakespeare sought to recreate a "historical" context for his play. In the last line of his prophecy, the Fool is clearly associated with Merlin, the well-known prophet of the legend of King Arthur. This is part of what stimulates the laughter, yet the figure of the Fool can be disquieting, too. Helped by the lurking presence of the legendary character of Merlin who is druid, wizard and prophet, there appears the shadow of an Ancient figure, present mainly in the mythological cycles of Ireland and called Dagda, Cathbad, Dil, Colptha or Morfessa (Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1986, pp. 379, 201–202, 376 and 407). In their comprehensive study of the druids, Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux argue that in Ancient Ireland, "prediction is a general custom"[22] (p. 200) and that "the force of the prediction is such that after uttering it, the druid is incapable of changing the course of actions it seals"[23] (p. 201). This places the emphasis on the power of the word in the ancient traditions. They also stress the position of the figure of the druid as close counselor of the king, which is also the situation of the Fool, although the latter blends the comic and the tragic.

30 In the second section of our argument we have identified some methodological issues which allow us to reach the Antique Insular Celtic stratum in Shakespeare's texts—links between literature and archeology, comparative mythology, religious, historical or social interpretative filters, mythological and legendary motifs from the most obvious to the more diffuse, discourse as "con-text". One could argue that Shakespeare probably did not know about Celtic texts, therefore the elements that are cited here cannot be considered as "source". Yet, it appears that, as Barker and Hulme have argued:

> Intertextuality, or con-textualization, differs most importantly from source criticism when it establishes the necessity of reading [Shakespeare] alongside congruent texts, irrespective of Shakespeare's knowledge of them, and when it holds that such congruency will become apparent from the constitution of discursive networks to be traced independently of authorial "intentionality". (1986, p. 196)

31 The complex concepts of "intertextuality" and "source" would require another discussion. In the reconstruction of an Ancient past, which is what concerns us here, what stands out from the above quote is that the express will on the part of Shakespeare to include references to the Antique matter of the British Isles is not necessary (and would be impossible to determine). In other words, the cultural motifs are there, as part of the Elizabethan and Jacobean collective unconscious and are not subject to conscious authorial control. This does not mean that Shakespeare had no access to Celtic material in print—he certainly did through Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britaniae* and Holinshed's *Chronicles of England and Scotland*—, but the motifs that are to be found in his work do not necessarily require any clearly identified "source". Their richness and complexity show on the surface, or can be located *via* a symptomatic reading because they are embedded deeper within the fabric of the text. But beyond acknowledging a further layer of interpretation, let us now study the functionality of Celtic Antiquity in Shakespeare's work.

32 In his presentation entitled "Shakespeare's Authorities"[24] at the Biennial British Shakespeare Association Conference in 2014 in Stirling, Collin Burrow argued that "unlikely", "sideways" and sometimes "oblique" references to Classical Antiquity literature or philosophy—which he calls "authorities" rather than "sources"—could "feed the argument of the play" in which they were used. By argument, Burrow means "the theme of a work (*OED* 6)" or "the plot summary"; for example *Measure for Measure* (1604–1605) is a story about the devolution of authority (Burrow, 2014, p. 6). These references do not fit Geoffrey Bullough's classification in the *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of William Shakespeare* (1957):

> A peripheral and incidental 'non-narrative source' for a play, such as Montaigne's Essay of names can become an authority that feeds back into the plot. It can enable Shakespeare to create a character and an episode which is not in his source play but which reflects and refracts the larger argument of his own play. [...] Shakespeare could often use texts which lie outside Bullough's category of 'narrative and dramatic sources' to widen and deepen the argument of a play. (Burrow, 2014, p. 9)

33 All the examples he invokes come from Classical Antiquity, either directly or indirectly *via* authors like Montaigne. Having read these authors at school or under other circumstances, some features would emerge from the author's memory, and rise to the surface of the text. Plutarch and Montaigne contribute to shape Shakespeare's Pompey the Great, whose character "becomes part of the play's larger concern with the delegation of authority to people who might be no better than the law breakers they punish" (*ibid.*, p. 8). Indeed, Pompey, the bawd, the clown, becomes the executioner's assistant and endeavours to give a list of names which consequently fills Vienna's jail with people. Thus, a figure coming from Ancient times, Pompey, echoes the figure of Angelo, the tyrant to whom the Duke officially delegated his authority in his absence, and "this obliquely evoked authority feeds the argument of the play" (*ibid.*, p. 13). Burrow gives other examples to support his convincing demonstration, all related to Classical Antiquity, and all reflecting and refracting the main theme of the play.

34 This, as Burrow states, appears as "a deep feature of Shakespeare's compositional practices. From the later 1590s onwards he tended to multiply authority figures and shadow the larger argument of the play among peripheral characters" (2014, p. 10). This approach is also relevant for anecdotal elements and non-diegetic characters that issue from another type of Antiquity—the Celtic one. The presence of Camelot—King Arthur's Castle—, and Merlin, Arthur's close counselor in Shakespeare's *King Lear*,

serves a hidden argument in the play–adultery and its consequences for the stability of kings and kingdoms. Arthur's realm, like Lear's, is doomed to failure because of the absence of a queen. This common feature triggers their respective downfalls. In Shakespeare's play, Lear's queen is dead. The anonymous 1605 source play *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters Gonerill, Ragan and Cordella*, which opens with the recent death of the queen, makes the fact a major feature of the exposition scene and therefore, an important "underpresence", to use Burrow's term (2014, p. 23 and 2018, p. 50), for the plot of the play.

35 *King Lear* opens with a scene between Kent and Gloucester conversing about the latter's adulterous conception of his son Edmund, thus bringing adultery to the centre of the stage, as an underpinning argument of the play. Lear's queen is dead but he contemplates the possibility to assimilate her to an adulterous wife, depending on the reactions of her living daughters and heiresses, as he says in his cue to Regan who has just expressed her gladness in seeing her father: "Regan, I think you are. I know what reason / I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad, / I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb / Sepulchring an adultress. [to Kent] O, are you free?" (2.2, 318–321). In the figure of the woman lies implicit potential betrayal. Lear is disturbed because his daughter Gonerill has reduced his train of followers and he wants to count on Regan to plead his cause. The sisters are an extension of their mother, and the failure of the woman, either by death, adultery or treachery, remains the main factor of Lear's downfall.

36 In the extract above, the first of Lear's lines breaks on an unfinished sentence. He "thinks" a lot (the word is used twice in two lines) and his thoughts visibly disturb him as he changes subject quickly. This is the only reference to his queen in the play; we know she is dead, and although the conditional is used and the sentence starts with "if", in the alternative considered by Lear, she is associated with adultery. Nothing indicates that she was actually unfaithful to her husband but she could have been. The motif of the mother as an infectious being had started earlier in the scene under the garment of a disease called "Passio Hysterica" (*King Lear*, note 246–7, pp. 241–2): "O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! / Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow" (2.2, 246–247). Turned into a disease, the figure of the absent, potentially treacherous mother–queen triggers extremes of passion and sorrow and infects the king's mind, preventing him from ruling and leading him to folly. Old age is not a sufficient explanation for his abdication; the loss of the queen is the official reason given in the 1605 play and the Irish story entitled *The Tragic Fate of the Children of Lir (Oidhe Chloinne Lir)* also, significantly, begins with the death of their mother.

37 In the Arthurian tale, the kingdom sinks into chaos from the moment the king loses his queen, Guenevere, not because she dies but because she is adulterous. Laskaya and Salisbury observe that "Early Welsh tradition preserved within the Triads, ascribes 'Gwenhwyfar' with a reputation of being adulterous. She is listed as more treacherous than any notorious woman named in the triad of 'Three Faithless Wives': 'and one was more faithless than those three: Gwenhwyfar, wife of Arthur, since she shamed a better man than any of them'" (1995, pp. 244–9). Again the triad motif is to be noted and cannot but suggest a parallel with Lear's three daughters. John Boorman's film *Excalibur* (1981), an adaptation of Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur (1485)*, illustrates the fact that Arthur begins to decline as man and king as soon as he loses Guenevere. He appears physically and mentally weakened and wishes to give up the quest for the Grail. What

looks like the madness of the king throws the kingdom into chaos. This age-old theme reappears in *King Lear* fed by the presence, in the play, of apparently subsidiary motifs emanating from the Arthurian legend. Although the adultery of Guenevere is not openly mentioned in *King Lear*, the ancient tale carries echoes which serve to diffract the argument of Shakespeare's play suggesting numerous layers of interpretation.

38 One of them is the resounding Antique Insular Celtic "underpresence" which shows here in the relationship between the king and the feminine; as Miranda Green observes, "In Irish mythology it was the union of the mortal king with the goddess of the land which promoted fertility in Ireland" (1993, p. 50), and "The ruler of Ireland was inextricably linked to the fortunes and prosperity of the land itself" (p. 18). If the union is broken, if the goddess fails the sovereign, the future well-being of the kingdom cannot be assured and the king is no longer entitled to rule and must be deposed, or killed. If we refer to Eamonn Kelly's theory of the ritual murder of kings, this is what happened to inefficient sovereigns in Ireland (Kelly, 2014, p. 69). Much more can be said on the questions of death, power, the feminine, nature and the triads in *King Lear*.

39 Nevertheless, we have seen that a tale coming from the Celtic Antiquity of the British Isles informs the main argument of Shakespeare's play. Moreover, the mythic dimension is introduced in the very the name of "Lear" or "Leir" which appears in Irish and Welsh mythological cycles:

> Ler *(« mer, océan »), génitif* Lir [Llyr in Welsh]*: nom du père de Manannan* [Manawyddan in Welsh]*, l'un des dieux les plus importants du cycle mythologique. Le nom est évidemment métaphorique (un sens secondaire est « multitude, abondance ») et il désigne à l'origine l'océan en tant qu'« étendue, immensité plate »* [...]*. On a douté expressément — et inutilement — de l'existence de cette divinité qui représente un des aspects des origines des Tuatha Dé Danann. Ler, personnage mythique, est réellement mis en scène dans le récit — transmis tardivement et christianisé — du* Oidhe Chloinne Lir *ou « Mort des enfants de Ler ». Il y est le père de quatre enfants, Aedh, Conn, Fiachra et Fionnghuala (trois garçons et une fille) que leur marâtre, sa seconde épouse Aoife, a transformés en cygnes pour une période de neuf cent ans au terme de laquelle ils sont recueillis par saint Mochaomog qui les convertit et, après leur retour à la forme humaine, assiste à leur mort et envoie leurs âmes au paradis.* (Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1986, p. 401)[25]

40 A further study will develop the discussion of this tale in relation to *King Lear*, especially insofar as the liminal connection with pagan and Christian traditions is concerned. The elements so far acknowledged first help situate *King Lear* in a remote Bronze Age period, to which he belongs according to Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronology of the kings of Britain after Brutus. Secondly, as elements of Classic Antiquity, they help nourish the play's main argument of kingship, legitimacy and fidelity. Yet, if place, time and culture coincide in *King Lear*, there are other plays situated in more exotic contexts in which elements from Ancient Insular Antiquity also feed back into the plot.

41 Our last example showing the relevance of Colin Burrow's theory to Celtic Antiquity is *Romeo and Juliet*.[26] The play is set in early Renaissance Verona, Italy, therefore nothing approaching Insular Antiquity, yet, as it has often been observed, the presence of the mythic Irish Queen Mab[27] is inserted into the Italian setting of the play. In what resembles an off-topic, digressive vision, she visits Mercutio who, from the sad look on the face of his friend Romeo, imagines that the queen has come to discuss a story of love, war and death with him. However, love, war and death are major ingredients of the plot of the play:

> O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
> She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
> In shape no bigger than an agate stone
> On the forefinger of an alderman,
> Drawn with a team of little atomi
> Over men's noses as they lie asleep.
> Her chariot is an empty hazelnut
> Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
> [...]
> And in this state she gallops night by night
> Through lovers' brains, and they dream of love;
> [...]
> Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
> And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
> Of breaches, ambuscades, Spanish blades,
> [...] (1.4, 53–85)

42 Although Mab is seen as a diminutive fairy queen on a chariot drawn by a company of insects, and although she is a "midwife", which is one of the characteristics of fairies, some of the qualities of the Ancient mythic queen filter in the depiction that Shakespeare provides. She has the ability to ride on a chariot, like the Ancient queen of the Iceni tribe Boudicca who led a revolt against the Romans in 60–61 AD; she has the capacity to induce war and to encourage her warriors, and she is endowed with the power of sexual attraction, like the mythic queen Medb:

> Medb rode her chariot around the field of battle, encouraging her soldiers, inducing quarrels, bribing warriors (even using her own daughter Finnebair) to take up arms against friends and relatives as well as against the Ulstermen. Thus Medb was not simply fighting for the supremacy of Connacht: she gloried in war, bloodshed and destruction for their own sake; she was the essence of death. She was sexually active, mating with nine kings, and allowing no man to rule at the royal court of Tara unless he slept with her. (Green, 1995, p. 40)

43 Behind the anecdotic episode of Queen Mab which does not contribute to the diegesis of the play, there lingers the powerful force of the original Medb. Her presence, enticing lovers to "dream of love" and soldiers to "dream of cutting foreign throats" is performative and proleptic in that right at the beginning of the play, this oblique reference informs the events to come and the theme of the tragedy as a whole. It also shows that the Elizabethan audience was likely to be receptive to such an image which, although deformed and minimized still encapsulates some remnants of the Ancient past of the British Isles.

44 To conclude we will argue that if for Colin Burrow the notion of "the classical" in Shakespeare is far from being "restrained and decorous" but is "a whole world of unruly authorities fighting together to spit out passion" (2014, p. 23 and 2018, p. 50), the same is true of Celtic Antiquity. Reference texts and archeological data are available to demonstrate the presence of Ancient insular "authorities" within the Shakespearean corpus, which contributes to the strengthening and enriching of meaning and interpretation. Some elements are visible, *verbatim*, in the texts of the plays, but some require more in-depth analysis, and that study is in its early stages.

45 This presentation has shown that the word "Celtic" should be used with great care but that philological investigation permits such an approach, especially when focused on language and by extension on literature. Yet, archeologists like Eamonn P. Kelly and John Collis rightly express the caution that the investigation requires: "We all agree

that the way in which we use terms like 'Celtic' has to be applied carefully or it can lead to outcomes that are neither academically or politically acceptable." (Collis, 2010, p. 34) Therefore, we need to be as precise as possible as far as the particularities of each Celtic language and text are concerned. When using references to Europe, precise geographical terms must be used.

46 Secondly, examples from the Shakespearean corpus have indicated the presence of insular Celtic motifs in the body of the plays. We have seen that these references to the Ancient past are not nostalgic, instead they may be comic or lighthearted. The ambient discourse is to be considered as much as printed texts in the semi-oral, semi-literate Elizabethan and Jacobean society in which ideas circulate in spoken form as much as beliefs.

47 Colin Burrow, provides us with an analytic framework, in pointing to the fact that these "peripheral and incidental 'non-narrative' sources" (2014, p. 9) are part of "a deep feature of Shakespeare's compositional practices" (p. 10) from the 1590s, which enables us to include Ancient Celtic motifs in the theory that references to Antiquity act as "authorities" which feed back into the main argument of the plays.

48 Finally, one may wonder why the Celtic Antique motifs have not been exhaustively studied before. In response to this, at least two points can be advanced. First, as John T. Koch indicated in his note on philology and philologists, "Celtic scholarship has always been at pains to justify its existence in, for example, universities like Oxford and Harvard and even to the Celts themselves with their ingrained sense of cultural inferiority and irrelevance" (1990, p. 34). Although we can now observe in this quote the inappropriate usage of the term "Celt" as referring to people, there seems to have been be a certain amount of tension in the area of Celtic studies, at least before the 1990s. Koch describes the struggle of Sir John Rhŷs to illustrate this point (p. 32).

49 The second argument which might explain the lack of scholarly interest in Celtic culture through the Shakespearean oeuvre owes its debt to the work of Walter Ong. It has to do precisely with the fact that we are dealing with an originally oral culture. Oral culture has been deemed difficult or impossible to study because, by definition, it is not easily documented. Its particularities could not be fully grasped until the advent of the digital era, as Ong puts it: "Contrasts between electronic media and print have sensitized us to the earlier contrast between writing and orality." (1982, p. 3) Of course, the "primary orality" (p. 11) of the Celtic speaking peoples of the British Isles is lost even by Shakespeare's time, but it is possible to access its remnants through an understanding of the "orality" of the Renaissance. The "mind-set of primary orality" (*ibid.*) is preserved, but transformed, although in limited proportion, in the cultural markers of the English Renaissance. Furthermore, we can say that the writing and printing processes at work at the time enable us to gain access to part of the ancient oral form, allowing us a glimpse through an open window on the past.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

HARF-LANCNER Laurence (trans.) & WARNKE Karl (ed.), 1990, *Lais de Marie de France*, Paris, Librairie Générale Française, coll. Lettres Gothiques, Le Livre de Poche.

HERODOTUS, *Histories*, translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt, London, Penguin Classics, 2003 [1954].

HOLINSHED Raphael, 1577, *The Historie of Scotlande*, London, Henry Bynneman for George Bishop.

LASKAYA Anne & SALISBURY Eve (eds), 1995, *The Middle English Breton Lays*, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Medieval Institute Publications.

SHAKESPEARE William, *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, R. A. Foakes (ed.), London, Cengage Learning, 1997.

SHAKESPEARE William, *Macbeth*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (eds), London, New York, Bloomsbury, 2015.

SHAKESPEARE William, *Romeo and Juliet*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, René Weis (ed.), London, New York, Bloomsbury, 2012.

Secondary Sources

BARTHES Roland, 1953, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Paris, Seuil.

BARKER Francis & HULME Peter, 1985, "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: The Discursive Con-Texts of *The Tempest*", in J. Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares*, London, Methuen, pp. 191–205.

BOORMAN John, 1981, *Excalibur*, screenplay by Rospo Pallenberg and John Boorman, Orion Pictures, USA.

BUCHSENSCHUTZ Olivier (ed.), 2015, *L'Europe celtique à l'âge du Fer, VIII^e^-I^er^ siècle*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France.

BURROW Colin, 2014, "Shakespeare's Authorities", lecture at the British Shakespeare Association Conference, Stirling.

BURROW Colin, 2016, "Montaignian Moments: Shakespeare and the *Essays*", in N. Kenny, R. Scholar, W. Williams (eds), *Montaigne in Transit, Essays in Honour of Ian Maclean*, Cambridge, Legenda, pp. 239–252.

BURROW Colin, 2018, "Shakespeare's Authorities", in K. Halsey and A. Vine (eds), *Shakespeare and Authority*, London, Pallgrave Macmillan, pp. 31–54.

CLANCY Thomas Owen, 2015 (13 July), "How being Celtic got a bad name — and why you should care", *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/how-being-celtic-got-a-bad-name-and-why-you-should-care-44540> (last accessed 14 January 2017).

COLLIS John, 2010, "Why Do We Still Dig Iron Age Ramparts?", in S. Fichtl (dir.), *Murus celticus. Architecture et fonctions des remparts de l'âge du Fer (Actes du colloque organisé par l'UMR 7044 de Strasbourg, l'UMR 6173-CITERES de Tours et Bibracte, à Glux-en-Glenne les 11 et 12 octobre 2006)*, Glux-en-Glenne, Bibracte, pp. 27–35.

COLLIS John, 2011, *The Celts, Origins, Myths, Inventions* [2003], Stroud, Gloucestershire, Tempus Publishing.

FOX Adam, 2000, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Oxford Studies in Social History.

GREEN Miranda Jane, 1993, *Celtic Myths*, London, British Museum Press.

GREEN Miranda Jane, 1995, *Celtic Goddesses*, London, British Museum Press.

GUYONVARC'H Christian J. & LE ROUX Françoise, 1986, *Les Druides*, Rennes, Éditions Ouest-France.

HELGERSON Richard, 1992, *Forms of Nationhood, The Elizabethan Writing of England*, Chicago, London, Chicago University Press.

KELLY Eamonn P., 2014 (13th November), "The Bog Bodies Project: Latest Research", lecture at the National Museum of Ireland. Pdf available on <www.academia.edu>.

KOCH John T., 1990, "Thoughts on Celtic Philology and Philologists", *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, *What is Philology?*, pp. 31–6.

KOCH John T., 2015a (16th October), "In Search of the Celts: Beyond Art, Language and Genetics", lecture at The British Museum. Pdf available on <www.academia.edu>.

KOCH John T., 2015b (December), "Celtic from the West", lecture given in Gothenburg, Sweden. Pdf available on <www.academia.edu>.

MACCONE Kim, 2008, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities*, Myles Dillon Memorial Culture Series.

ONG Walter J., 1982, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Terence Hawkes (ed.), London and New York, Methuen, coll. "New Accents".

SAVATIER-LAHONDÈS Céline, 2017, "The Walking Forest Motif in Shakespeare's Macbeth – Origins", *Notes and Queries*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 287–92.

NOTES

1. The word itself contains its own inheritance: "Lay" or "'lai', from the Celtic 'laid' meaning 'song'", in *Lais de Marie de France*, trans. Harf-Lancner, 1990, p. 13.
2. The term, used in inverted comas, needs precision. See *supra*.
3. Middle English Breton Lays such as *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Guingamor*, *Sir Degaré* or *Sir Orfeo* indicate the existence of "Celtic" elements beneath the surface of each poem. See Laskaya and Salisbury (1995, pp. 16–17): "Orpheus becomes a Christ figure and the tales foretells redemption. The lay of *Sir Orfeo* blends these received cultural materials with both Celtic and Germanic folk materials, especially the Celtic journey to the Otherworld, thereby producing what Jeff Rider terms 'a hybrid super-myth'."
4. On p. 10, Collis has the reproduction of the dedicatory poem prefacing Buchanan's *Historia Rerum Scoticarum* (1582) in which is written the mention "origine Celtas", dealing with the Scots.
5. "[...] *des images, un débit, un lexique, naissent du corps et du passé de l'écrivain et deviennent peu à peu les automatismes mêmes de son art. Ainsi sous le nom de style se forme un langage autarcique qui ne plonge ses racines que dans la mythologie personnelle et secrète de l'auteur.*" (Barthes, 1953, p. 16) English translation by CSL.

6. A part of the Temple of Mercury, at the top of the Puy-de-Dôme in Auvergne (France) has been recently rebuilt, creating anew the very picture of the actual building not only in mind this time but in real life.

7. <www.archeologiesenchantier.ens.fr/spip.php?article61> (last accessed 14 January 2018).

8. <www.dailymotion.com/video/xd6svf> (mn 13', dubbed in French; last accessed 30 December 2017). <www.channel4.com/programmes/the-celts> (2006 original version, not easily accessible).

9. In the first contemporary sense of myth: "an idea or story that many people believe but which is not true" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*).

10. "The general public yearns for some knowledge on a people which seems to represent part of their own past and on a culture which is successively assimilated to the state of nature, to romanticism, to national independence. For them, Celtic culture suggests an alternative to classicism, to the reason of state, or even to Christianity and globalization. The Celts belong to the domain of utopia, be it reduced to a single Gaul village; it sometimes feels like for the general public to insert them in the normal succession of historical civilizations would amount to uselessly destroying a very pleasant dream." (Buchsenschutz, 2015, p. 3) English translation by CSL.

11. Personal correspondence by email dated 12 August 2016, reproduced here with kind permission of the author.

12. Herodotus is generally regarded to have been the first written reference to the term in his *Histories* (430 BC), Book Two, 33 and Book Four, 49, in the edition translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt, 2003 [1954], pp. 108 and 256.

13. A scholar of Welsh origin, and one of the first curators of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

14. "*à la faveur d'une vague de celtomanie, à laquelle contribuèrent beaucoup les sociétés savantes galloises* [...]*, écossaises et irlandaises*" (Buchsenschutz, pp. 16–17). English translation by CSL.

15. The term "British Isles" is generally understood as comprising the British Isles and Ireland.

16. All references from *Macbeth*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (eds), 2015.

17. See C. Savatier-Lahondès (2017, pp. 287–92).

18. All references from *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, R. A. Foakes (ed.), 1997.

19. The lady from the other world rides a white horse: "A damesele alone upoon a whyt comely palfrey" who is also accompanied by two white dogs: "Twey whyte grehoundys ronne hyr by". (Laskaya & Salisbury, 1995, pp. 236–7)

20. In "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: The Discursive Con-Texts of *The Tempest*" (1985), Francis Barker and Peter Hulme developed the notion of con-text.

21. *King Lear*, *op. cit.*, p. 269, note 95.

22. "*la prédiction est une coutume générale*" (Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1986, p. 200). English translation by CSL.

23. "*la force de la prédiction est telle que, après l'avoir faite, le druide est impuissant à changer le cours du destin qu'elle marquée*" (Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1986, p. 201). English translation by CSL.

24. Part of the lecture has been published in *Shakespeare and Authority* (Halsey and Vine, 2018, pp. 31–54), and part of it was published in "Montaignian Moments: Shakespeare and the *Essays*" (in *Montaigne in Transit*, 2016, pp. 239–52). The quotes used here are drawn from the text of the lecture given in Stirling, with kind permission of the author.

25. "*Ler* ('Sea, Ocean'), genitive *Lir*: name of the father of Manannan, one of the most important gods of the mythological cycle. The name is obviously metaphorical (a secondary sense is 'multitude, abundance') and it originally refers to the ocean as 'vast and flat stretch of water' [...]. The existence of this divinity which represents one of the original aspects of the Tuatha De Danann was expressly—and uselessly—questioned. Ler, the mythical character really intervenes in the lately transmitted and Christianized story of *Oidhe Chloinne Lir* or 'The Death of the Children of Ler'. In the story, he is the father of four children, Aedh, Conn, Fiachna and

Fionnghula (three boys and a girl) whom their stepmother, Ler's second spouse Aoife has transformed into swans for a period of nine hundred years, at the end of which they are rescued by saint Mochaomog who converts them and, after they have resumed their human shape, attends their deaths and sends their souls to paradise." English translation by CSL.

26. All references from *Romeo and Juliet*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, René Weis (ed.), 2012.

27. Some have argued that because the spelling is different from the Irish Medb, it could not be her. This argument cannot be received firstly because spelling is not considered as fixed at the time, especially between English and Irish names, and secondly because the character described here bears some of the traits of the mythic queen.

ABSTRACTS

Our field of investigation is currently the way in which the pre-Roman and pre-Christian culture of the British and Irish Isles permeates the work of William Shakespeare. The main task consists in the excavation of motifs belonging to this ancient culture. Such motifs do not always evidently appear on the surface of the text. They sometimes do, but most often, they require a thorough in depth exploration.

This paper offers to examine some aspects of the (re)construction of the so called "Celtic" culture in Shakespearean drama. This has not been addressed before. In this sense we can talk of a "construction". However, the culture in question is preexistent to our study. Therefore, we may accept the idea of "reconstruction" of a forgotten past.

Firstly, since the word "Celt" is very vague, a definition of the period of time and the geographical areas involved will be needed. Then, we will explain how we came to the exploration of such a subject by developing two examples taken from Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Eventually, beyond the acknowledgment and observation of motifs, we will wonder why such an aspect of cultural history has been forgotten and what its reconstruction means now.

Cet article examine la façon dont les cultures pré-romaines et pré-chrétiennes des îles britanniques et irlandaises imprègnent l'œuvre de William Shakespeare. La tâche principale est l'excavation de motifs appartenant à cette très ancienne culture, motifs qui ne sont pas toujours apparents à la surface du texte, et requièrent un examen attentif.

Il s'agira d'examiner certains aspects de la (re)construction de la culture appelée « celte » dans les pièces du Barde, point peu évoqué jusqu'ici ; en ce sens, on peut donc parler d'une « construction ». Cependant, la culture en question préexiste à notre étude. Par conséquent, nous saisissons l'idée de la « reconstruction » d'un passé oublié.

Après avoir défini l'ère et l'aire concernées, nous expliquerons comme nous en sommes venue à l'exploration de ce sujet en développant deux exemples tirés du *Roi Lear*, pour finir par nous interroger sur les raisons qui, derrière la reconnaissance et l'observation des motifs, ont fait qu'un tel aspect de l'histoire culturelle s'est vue oubliée, et ce que le reconstruire veut dire aujourd'hui.

INDEX

Mots-clés: celtisme et Shakespeare, Le roi Lear, reconstruction de l'histoire en littérature, les sélections de l'histoire culturelle
Keywords: Celtism and Shakespeare, King Lear, the reconstruction of history in literature, the selectiveness of cultural history

AUTHOR

CÉLINE SAVATIER-LAHONDÈS

Université Clermont-Auvergne (France), CNRS, IHRIM /
University of Stirling (Scotland, UK).
Céline Savatier-Lahondès is a fourth year PhD student, working under the joint supervision of Professor Danièle Berton from the University of Clermont-Ferrand-Auvergne (France), and Professor John Drakakis, from the University of Stirling (UK). She is also a secondary school English teacher in France. Her research center is IRHIM Clermont, UMR 5317 CNRS.
She has already had the opportunity to communicate elements of her research in conferences in France and in Ireland. Two articles have been accepted for publication in France: *eCrini*, Nantes, on "Debt and Indebtedness in Medieval Texts" and *Études écossaises*, Genoble, on "The Inner Seas between Scotland and Ireland". One has been accepted in the UK: *Notes and Queries*, Oxford, on the walking forest in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Céline Savatier-Lahondès est une doctorante en co-tuelle en quatrième année, sous la direction de Mme le Professeur Danièle Berton (Université de Clermont-Ferrand-Auvergne, France), et du Pr. John Drakakis (University of Stirling, UK). Elle enseigne également dans le secondaire en France. Elle appartient au centre de recherches IRHIM Clermont, UMR 5317 CNRS.
Elle a eu l'occasion de présenter des éléments de sa recherche au cours de conférences en France et en Irlande. Deux de ses articles ont été acceptés pour publication en France, dans *eCrini*, Nantes, sur « Debt and Indebtedness in Medieval Texts » et *Études écossaises*, Grenoble, sur « The Inner Seas between Scotland and Ireland », et un autre au Royaume-Uni, dans *Notes and Queries*, Oxford, sur la marche de la forêt dans *Macbeth*.